

I. Amendments to the Specification

Please replace paragraph number 14 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0014] Hodge et al., U.S. Patent 5,346,288, teach a continuous cushioning member interposed laterally between a plastic wheel cover and a wheel, so as to avoid noise between the plastic cover and the steel wheel. Hodge et al. disclose that an outer peripheral portion of the cover overlies an outward turned flange portion of the wheel and is positioned in lateral proximity thereto. Like Todd, Hodge et al. does not provide sufficient disclosure with respect to the radially outer peripheral overlap of the cover to the underlying structural elements of the wheel. Because the overlapping relationships appear to be nearly co-diametrical but are nonetheless unclear, and because there is no disclosure to the contrary, it can only be reasonably presumed that the covers of Todd and Hodge et al. ~~that~~ and the rim flanges of the wheel comply with the tire and wheel association standards ~~and that the fascias or wheel cover can extend radially beyond the extreme radially peripheral edge of the wheel due to tolerance variations in both the wheel and the cover.~~

Please replace paragraph number 21 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0021] Consequently, what is needed is an overlay that covers the entire outboard surface of the wheel including a wheel where the rim flange has been ~~eliminated entirely~~ reduced to a minimum functional flange height or truncated by machining ~~to a minimum functional flange height~~ and the overlay is assembled to the wheel without wrapping around the flange lip of the rim flange of the wheel so as to not affect the aesthetics of the vehicle. Such an overlay is appropriately retained with an adhesive to the outboard surface of the wheel, wherein the

peripheral flange of the overlay is preferably not located against the ~~flangeless~~ minimum functional flange height rim flange, or alternatively against a machined wheel or truncated ~~flange lip of the~~ rim flange of the wheel. This configuration will seal the interface between the overlay and the wheel, and ensure overlay and tire integrity under all operating and service conditions of the wheel, including tire installation and removal, radial load deflections, and "run flat" conditions.

Please replace paragraph number 22 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0022] According to the present invention, there is provided an overlay that is permanently secured to a wheel, where the overlay is brought radially outward to cover the entire outboard face of a wheel, including a truncated flange lip of the rim flange of the wheel without wrapping around the rim flange of the wheel. The present invention includes a wheel having an outboard surface defined by a disk, and a rim circumscribed about the disk. The rim's radial outer periphery (or the disk's outer periphery in the case of a full face wheel) is defined by a flangeless or minimum functional flange height rim or alternatively a truncated rim flange having a flange lip as the axially outermost edge. Additionally, the present invention includes an overlay that covers the entire outboard surface of the wheel including the flange lip of the rim flange. The overlay has an outboard surface with a web portion, and an integral peripheral flange which extends to the peripheral edge of the wheel in case of a flangeless or minimum functional flange height wheel rim circumscribed about the web portion. Further, the peripheral flange portion of the overlay also terminates in a flange lip as the radially outermost edge which covers a truncated or machined rim flange of the wheel. The peripheral flange portion of the overlay has an inboard

surface that is near to the axially outermost edge of the rim flange of the wheel while the radially outermost edge or flange lip of the peripheral flange portion of the overlay is circumferentially aligned within a predetermined tolerance variation of the radially outer periphery of the rim flange of the wheel, such that the peripheral flange portion of the overlay covers the flangeless or minimum functional flange height wheel rim or alternative truncated flange lip of the rim flange of the wheel without wrapping over the edge of the wheel. This relationship gives a visible impression to the observer of the vehicle or wheel alone that the entire outboard surface of the overlay is actually the entire outboard surface of the wheel. This impression is accomplished without wrapping the overlay's peripheral flange portion around the flange lip of the standard rim flange, as with some previous prior art. The present invention also overcomes the disadvantages of other prior art in which the overlay extends up to, but does not cover the flange lip of the standard rim flange of the wheel.

Please replace paragraph number 23 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0023] For example, one advantage of the present invention is that the overlay protects the extremities of the flangeless or minimum functional flange height rim or alternative truncated flange lip of the rim flange of the wheel from stone chips. The overlay is made of a chrome-plated plastic material that is more resistant to stone chipping than the protective coating applied to the outboard surface of the wheel. Also, such complete coverage would conceal corrosion that may arise from galvanic action between some types of stainless steel overlays and the wheel. Further, having the overlay cover the entire wheel outboard surface creates the visible impression

that the overlay outboard surface is actually the entire outboard surface of the wheel and not a separate attachment.

Please replace paragraph number 44 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0044] FIG. 7 illustrates a cross-sectional view of the peripheral area of the rim area of a wheel similar to “Euro” style wherein the axially outboard extending portion of the rim flange of the wheel has been eliminated completely and only a minimum functional height rim flange is used and the overlay is bonded to an outboard face of the remaining portion of the rim or face of the wheel;

Please replace paragraph number 48 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0048] FIG. 10A illustrates a cross-sectional view of a flangeless or minimum functional flange height rim flange or alternative truncated rim flange area of a generic wheel and overlay assembly wherein a maximum circumferential margin is shown; and

Please replace paragraph number 49 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0049] FIG. 10B illustrates a cross-sectional view of a flangeless or minimum functional flange height rim flange or alternative truncated rim flange area of a generic wheel and overlay assembly wherein a minimum circumferential margin is shown.

Please replace paragraph number 60 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0060] Another embodiment of the proposed invention of a clad wheel assembly 310 as shown in FIG. 7 illustrates a cross section of a wheel 330 similar to the newly developed Pneu Accrochage (PAV-vertically anchored tire) by Michelin, wherein the traditional flange lip and rim flange of the wheel 330 has been modified to be a minimum functional flange height ~~eliminated~~. Unlike the rim flanges of the previous embodiments, a rim flange 337 of this embodiment has no axially outboard extending flange lip. Rather, the rim flange 337 of this embodiment terminates in a flange lip 338 that continues from the minimum functional flange height rim flange 337 in a generally radially outward direction and has a radially outermost edge 338a. As before, the radially outermost lip or peripheral edge 358a of the rim flange 358 of the overlay 350 extends as far as, but no further than, the radially outermost edge 338a of the wheel flange lip 338 so as to provide a visible impression that the decorative layer completely covers an outboard surface 331 of the wheel 330 to the outer periphery thereof without detrimental aesthetic effects. As with all of the embodiments of the present invention, it is preferable that a circumferential margin be present between the overall diameter of the overlay 350 and the overall diameter of the wheel 330 because of the concentricity tolerance variations between the outer diameters of the wheel and the overlay. Again, an adhesive/sealant bead 42 is placed between the overlay 350 and the wheel 330 to prevent squeaking or noise. Since the embodiment of FIG. 7 depicts a wheel 330 without the traditional flange lip, such configuration would not comply with the standard Tire and Rim Association standard dimensions as well as nomenclature.

Please replace paragraph number 66 with the following rewritten paragraph:

[0066] As set forth above and according to the present invention, the wheel assembly incorporates the overlay that is permanently secured to the outboard surface of the wheel, wherein the overlay extends radially outward to cover a major portion of the flange lip of a flangeless or minimum functional flange height rim or alternative truncated machined rim flange of a wheel but does not extend beyond the radially outermost edge of the rim flange of the wheel, such that the overlay appears to be the actual wheel diameter and not a separate attachment. As a result, any decorative finish such as chrome plating or heat resistant paint on the overlay appears to be formed on the wheel itself. This is particularly advantageous with hard to plate wheel materials, such as cast aluminum. Accordingly, optimization of the wheel's design and styling can be achieved independent of plating or paint limitations. Other limitations are overcome by the present invention and are discussed below.